Ahmad Sa'adat

part two

...lives in prison, but prison does not live in him. He writes about everyone – yet never about himself. Though deeply entangled in the inferno of the occupation's prisons, he witnesses israeli fascism as it relentlessly practices repression & brutality, seeking to crush the imprisoned human being & strip their life of meaning. Imprisoned comrade, fighter, & General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, his words written from behind bars tell us that a human being, through their belonging, their values, and the justice of their cause, is stronger than the prison & all instruments of repression & disintegration. Read. Act.

ECHOES of the Shackles

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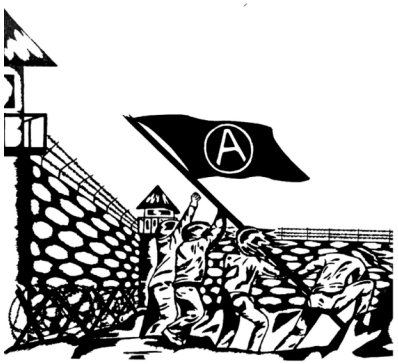
with whatever weapons at hand



performance and national struggle — not decline or bargaining away dimensions of the national file, as happened recently when a theoretical agreement to free veteran prisoners was leveraged in exchange for silence about the accelerating waves of settlement that the occupation government counts on to determine the outcome of negotiations on the ground.

In short, what is required is to create a logical balance in policy-making that lays the foundation for building the fighting instruments capable of translating those policies into the achievement of our people's and leadership's goals and toward victory.

Note:

This study is focused on describing events and experiences that took place during the author's personal experience in solitary confinement between 2009–2012. Therefore, the individuals whose names are mentioned are those who happened to be in isolation during that specific period. It is important to note that there are many other names and inspiring experiences of individuals who endured solitary confinement either before or after this time, but their names are not included here.

more than twenty years been unable to dismantle a single settlement, stop the tsunami of settlement expansion, or return a single refugee to the land from which he was uprooted in 1948. What they achieved regarding the prisoners—whom "Israel" used as hostages and bargaining chips for the negotiating team it accuses of having "blood-stained hands"—was meager, limited to the release of the martyr Abu al-Sukkar, Saeed al-Attaba, and Abu Ali Yatta. Yet some at the top leadership of the PLO still comfort themselves by betting on the same negotiations and existing references to achieve goals, and they stifle any serious attempts to break out of this circle and open a tried and tested militant path capable of attaining objectives and restoring the legitimacy of comprehensive resistance as a threshold for achievements to build upon.

Finally, this modest work is a call to all the living forces of our people to move beyond slogans that glorify the prisoners and their heroism and to begin serious action to free them — adopting a comprehensive policy that addresses all dimensions of the national cause and documents its programs and coherence as an integrated system that consolidates our national rights. Any attempt to separate these dimensions represents nothing but cheap bargaining that will rebound on the Palestinian people and inflict further damage and risk on their struggle.

Because our focus here is on the prisoners, we must reject the logic of profiteering from their cause to justify cheap concessions that harm the dimensions of the national issue. The prisoners who pay for their freedom and pay the price with their struggles to protect and achieve the principles of our cause will not accept having their cause traded away — regardless of the cancerous expansion of Zionist settlements or the Judaization of Jerusalem. Above all, the prisoners need a protective fence in the form of the international legal framework; this means opening a path of struggle to rectify their legal status by building on international recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state, and not subordinating this process to the anger or approval of Israel and the United States. What is required is to complete the correction of the prisoners' status equation by recognizing them as prisoners of war and freedom fighters, as set forth in the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. Within this systematic framework one can struggle for their release and reclaim our people's right to resort to all means to achieve it. What is needed is an elevation of

Echoes of the Shackles

part two

صدى القيد

Ahmad Sa'adat

2017

V: The Foundations of the Isolated Prisoners' Resilience

The overall factors behind the resilience of isolated prisoners stem from the strength of their ideological and national affiliation. This is what has defeated one of the main objectives of solitary confinement: severing the connection between the freedom fighter and the collective. Belonging to the national cause ensures that the organic group, with the values and goals it represents, remains ever-present with the prisoner. As the communist leader Julius Fučík established, belonging to the group is an organic and moral bond, and the conviction in the justice of the struggle and the humanitarian mission of the people forms the cornerstone for strengthening willpower and determination. It reinforces the foundations needed to overcome the tools of Zionist oppression, with all their various methods and programs. Anyone who reviews the names of those who were martyred after prolonged periods of isolation will see that they were all either political or military leaders associated with meaningful acts of sacrifice — and nearly all of them, without exception, had experienced periods of being pursued or in hiding.

The second factor is that this distinguished group of men not only revived the group, its values, and its bonds, but also worked on establishing their own community that imposed its own rules and values on all the components of solitary confinement—a community governed by its criminal bonds and values before its activist ones. This community was dominated by values of solidarity, intimacy, and love. This group created, out of their harsh living conditions and relationships, a steel-like fabric to confront the effects of solitary confinement and the factors of social and psychological oppression.

The third factor is that they learned how to adapt the reality and challenges of prison life; they lived in prison without letting prison live in

The leadership institutions that neglected this also include the Palestinian leadership institutions within the PLO, the Authority, and the Palestinian political movement in general. What was difficult was achieved by the prisoners' will when they decided to break through and overcome the barrier of despair, forming a protective wall and a strong lever to break the locks on solitary confinement cells.

It is true that the suffering of the prisoners and the continued detention of them within prison walls is a price and a revolutionary-duty entitlement of the revolutionary process to achieve our people's national goals. But that does not absolve the forces and institutions of our people of their duty to support the prisoners and to work for their release by all possible means — a national duty and also a revolutionary entitlement no less important than the duty to liberate the land and return the refugees.

This study, from another angle, is an attempt to persuade some of those who have succumbed to or internalized defeat that our national movement, with all its components, possesses a tremendous reserve of energy to accomplish tasks that may today seem impossible. Through organization, planning, dissemination and determination it will steadily move toward achieving them.

After the prisoners were infected by the "Oslo virus," whether some carried the banner of opposition or were influenced by it, they spent long years — from 2004 to 2012 — engaged in dialogue with the Prison Service Directorate to remove prisoners from isolation or to improve its conditions. They internalized the conviction that building a base of understandings with the Prison Directorate, coupled with a limited level of engagement, would achieve their goals. The reality opposed this approach: all dialogue sessions and all policies built on the strength of logic were unable to open a single solitary cell. Those released from isolation were replaced by other prisoners in their place. Many of the symbols even doubted the possibility that any militant step could end the policy of isolation. The response came from comrades in the Popular Front with the September 2011 hunger strike, which opened the path to a series of subsequent successful individual strikes culminating in the Dignity Strike of 2012 — affirming that the path to achieving objectives that seem impossible springs from the empty gut determined to secure victory.

At the national level, the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations have for

Conclusion

This is a modest presentation of the policy of solitary confinement, its manifestations and dimensions in the record of Zionist terror. It does not deal with the issue in all its details so much as it focuses on its essential aspects. Thus it is not a history or a documentation of the context of this racist practice, nor is it — by any means — an autobiography of its author or of others mentioned by name or symbol in it. Its aim, first, is to focus on the dangers facing the prisoners' symbols by bringing the picture closer and giving a vivid description of the course of events—what might be called the "cemetery of the living." Its second aim is to cast revealing light on the overall negligence at all levels and from all sides — official, popular, legal, local and international — in providing protection and cover for the prisoners.

The reality has been marketed that a prisoner will exhaust his life within prison walls; for some it has come to pass that they spend more than thirty years in captivity. Many still waste their lives in prisons while the shortfall and negligence are compensated with honorary titles and consolation prizes given to activists: this one a colonel, that one a brigadier, another a general of patience; the remaining thousands are called heroes or champions and remain confined while the real effort that should be made to free them and support their struggle is absent. Even when efforts do occur, they are occasional and scattered, though generally better than nothing, and they have freed a significant number of prisoners.

It has also been marketed that spending years inside the cells of solitary confinement is the worst and most extreme form of torture. Here negligence becomes compounded: the prisoner movement, which stood a short distance from the isolation sections and included those who experienced its bitterness, shirked its role and allowed impotence to enter its lexicon. It spent years bargaining with the Prison Directorate to improve the conditions of isolation instead of ending it — rather than shifting the rifle from shoulder to shoulder and starting action. The walls of the isolated began to pound or the walls of despair started to collapse and ultimately fell apart after the success of the Dignity Hunger Strike.

them. They established openness toward each other's problems and overcame values of self-isolation, contrary to what the jailer aimed for. They learned how to pass time without being broken by it and resorted to organizing their lives inside solitary confinement and making use of time. First, by practicing sports to compensate for lack of movement and work that took a significant part of their time, such as cleaning, cooking, preparing food, and managing social dialogues, no matter how brief, whether their topic was political, intellectual, sports-related, or recreational. Finally, through reading and writing, renewing their ideas and readings, and preparing letters for family and relatives. The exercise hour was divided into two parts: the first for sports and the second for social interaction and political chats with other rooms inside the section if the geography of the place allowed, or with brothers and comrades in other solitary confinement sections.

I would not be far from the truth to confirm that each group that experienced solitary confinement formed an open social membership far from isolation, either through awareness or the need to satisfy sensory hunger caused by the conditions of solitary confinement. Everyone knew each other and their family members and social issues, despite the enemy's deliberate attempt in cases of double isolation to place a leftist and a religious person or a Hamas member with a Fatah member, in an attempt —or calculation—to let their ideological and political differences sour their social life. But allegiance to the cause and the common trench to oppose the jailer subdued these points of conflict and turned them into material for deepening social interaction. Often, the quarrels became playful banter that helped break and conquer time and strengthen social bonds.

The solitary confinement experience united prisoners from all intellectual, political, and social backgrounds, melting them into one family at the level of the section and across the solitary confinement sections. Factors stemming from loneliness and the suffering of restraint acted as supportive factors that unified prisoners' feelings, expanded their social circle, and widened their network of acquaintances to include the families of those in solitary confinement—especially when some radio stations dedicated programs for social communication between the prisoner and his family. Listening to a message from the family of a

certain prisoner renewed the interest and follow-up of all solitary confinement prisoners. This, in turn, created bonds between prisoners and the relatives of each prisoner, and between the families themselves. Everyone keenly and admiringly followed the conversation of the child Mahmoud with his father Ahmed Al-Maghrabi or his virtuous wife, or the mother of Hassan Salameh (and later his wife Ghufran Zamel). All the solitary confinement prisoners followed the speech of Hassan Salameh and everyone celebrated the occasion. Everyone lived moment by moment with brother Hassan, rejoiced in his joy, and shared his emotions. Additionally, there was the talk of the family of the Mujahid Sheikh Jamal Abu Al-Hija and his wonderful little daughter Sajida, who stood out with her performance and emotions, as well as the family of Abdullah Al-Barghouthi, his wife, and their children Osama, Tala, and Safa.

We used to follow their news, life events, progress, and the development of their performance—driven by their heartfelt emotions toward those they love. The conversations of the families of the prisoners were not limited to their social news; many of them became sources of information about the prisoner movement, its interactions, or solidarity activities held in support of the solitary confinement prisoners. Everyone would listen to the brave comrade "Umm Qais," or sister Ghufran, or the wife of brother Ahmed Al-Maghrabi, or comrade Umm Ghassan, or "Umm Ali," the wife of the exemplary leader Ibrahim Hamed. With the help of radio stations, the families of the isolated created a daily news network that compensated for what the jailer had deprived us of.

The truth is that any brief talk about this aspect does not do it justice nor covers the role they played in strengthening the steadfastness of the isolated prisoners or their resistance to all forms of oppression. This matter requires a separate, detailed treatment that elaborates on the ramifications of this aspect and the role it played in melting the isolated prisoners into one unified group that transcended geography, ideology, and temperaments—created by shared suffering that can unite any human group no matter how diverse.

The daily or nearly daily greeting programs broadcast through audio media became one of the most important components and elements of the isolated prisoner's social life. The audience of the families participating in such programs became like one family to the isolated prisoners. Over

Lesson Six

The necessary immunity to protect a prisoner's cohesion is to harden his attachment to his cause and to reinforce his belonging to the group and its values. In this case, neither the monster of solitary confinement, nor interrogation, nor any similar procedure can destroy his resolve. Summoning the group and its values when the enemy tries to sever our ties to it arms us with a strength multiplied many times over to withstand the instruments of oppression—in interrogation dungeons, in isolation, or under the gallows.

Lesson Seven

Through the policy of solitary confinement the enemy does not only aim to separate the prisoner from the community's values and to dismantle his belonging — his source of strength — but also to make the prison live inside the prisoner, so that the bars of the cell become spears that gnaw at his chest and turn him into lifeless blocks. Therefore do not allow the prison to creep into you, and always remember that at every difficult turn you do not represent only yourself but your entire people and, before that, your family: your sons, your daughters, your wife, your mother, your father, your siblings, your friends, and above all your comrades. In that case you must stand as a symbol of pride and dignity, a model resistant to breaking or containment. By your belonging, your values, and the justice of your cause you are stronger than the jailer and all the weapons of oppression and fragmentation. Our struggle is a battle of wills between the humane values of progress and the forces of reaction, backwardness, and racism. Your steadfastness will weaken your enemy and dismantle his racist character and values — so do not allow hatred to triumph over the constructive values of humanity.

among prisoners and to harness their struggle away from factionalism and party illnesses. Prisoner unity is the protective fence that preserves their dignity and rights and is the sharpest weapon to defend their existence, dignity, and political, demand-based rights.

Lesson Four

Isolated prisoners must strip away the legal cover from isolation procedures and boycott the sham courts the occupier convenes to conceal its transgressions and violations of international humanitarian law and the conventions prohibiting torture. They should base their resistance to isolation on their unity and struggles in order to make their voice heard and expose the enemy's violations and the forms and dimensions of its racist policies.

Lesson Five

The prisoner movement should learn from the many who voluntarily enter isolation cells by creating all the humane conditions that reflect the ethics and humanist content of our revolution. Many cases that could not adapt to the conditions of imprisoned social life should have been borne by the movement—with broadened tolerance to contain them and help them overcome their crises—instead of dealing with them in a slapdash, "come-and-collect" manner. Every person who came to the detention arena did so on the background of voluntary struggle in defense of the collective rights of our people, even if a large part of them lacked the necessary awareness and were driven by zeal and revolutionary passion. Prison, as an institution for re-producing the human being and his qualities and for equipping him with the sharpest weapons to defend his existence and convictions, must fulfill that role. If it does not, it means we all need to be re-produced.

To abandon activists simply because they became ill or mentally weak means we are handing our people's sons over as easy prey to be hunted by the enemy's intelligence—or, at best, pushing them to the brink of suicide.

time, the isolated prisoner began to follow the news of his fellow isolated prisoners in other prisons through the conversations of their families on the radio. The isolated prisoner also started to share in some of the families' joys and sorrows, got to know them, corresponded with them, and interacted with them to the point that he became always able to recognize the voice tremor of most families participating in these programs just by hearing their voices due to the strength of familiarity. After any program ended, there would be an exchange of remarks, comments, jokes about the news, witty remarks, or other intimate matters. Some isolated prisoners got to know their children, whom they had left at the age of one, two, or three years old and who could not speak or spoke with a lisp, through the broadcast of these programs. Today, those children have grown to adulthood — like Abdullah Al-Barghouthi, Hisham Al-Sharbati, Ibrahim Hamed, and Ahmed Al-Maghrabi — some of whom have spent up to ten years without meeting their child directly.

Another important factor that contributed to the steadfastness of the isolated prisoners was the role played by the lawyers—or, as they can rightly be called, the "angels of mercy" — who were among the main reasons for the isolated prisoners' willpower triumphing over the jailer's terror and part of the isolated prisoners' family and world. They volunteered to provide their services to connect the prisoner with his relatives, far from any personal calculations or fear of some facing punitive measures from the Shin Bet (Israeli security agency). They endured many harassment and always responded to every request without complaint. I recall that some, if not all, of those who visited solitary confinement sections were forced by the jailers to stand for hours under the scorching sun or in bitter cold while waiting for permission to visit an isolated prisoner in one prison or another.

These unknown soldiers deserve every word of honor and respect. They did not limit themselves to visiting the prisoners but also delivered their messages, followed up on delivering them, and sometimes bore part of our emotional reactions when the families' replies to the letters were delayed.

Another supporting factor was the role of international solidarity activists who participated in all the solidarity events for the prisoners in general and the isolated prisoners in particular. Their solidarity messages,

which sometimes managed to get through despite restrictions, made us feel that we were not alone in our battle against the Zionist repression machine. Across this universe, we had comrades and partners in shared human suffering. Their messages were like a hammer regularly breaking the chains of isolation and imprisonment. Short messages and postcards had a deep impact on the soul, from which we drew hope—not only to break the prison chains but also the chains of slavery, oppression, and injustice everywhere.

The community of free fighters around the world struggling to create a new world governed by relations of equality and parity among nations and peoples expands day by day. Unfortunately, sometimes we received some letters after the envelope containing the sender's address had been removed, which deprived us of the ability to communicate with them and thank them for their efforts.

The last factor was the ongoing mobilization of the prisoner movement to open the file of solitary confinement in any dialogue with prison service officers, through solidarity stand-ins, partial strikes, and up to general strikes. I particularly mention my comrades in the Popular Front, not only because of the shared organizational factor but because they were the first to break the ice of the prisoner movement. They initiated the revolutionary hunger strike in September 2011, protesting the policy of solitary confinement along with other brothers from allied factions. This initiative opened the door for a wave of subsequent individual strikes, culminating in the April 2012 strike that succeeded in breaking the chains of solitary confinement, in addition to other material and moral gains achieved by the national prisoner movement. These partial battles inside the walls of solitary confinement or prisons in general have been firmly confirmed.

The will of the oppressed will always remain stronger than the instruments of repression, cruelty, and oppression driven by sick psychologies fueled by hatred and feelings of racism.

These tools, which now live in ever-expanding isolation, are besieged by the forces of peace, progress, and freedom across the universe. This signals that the dream of the enslaved to be free—which has existed since the dawn of the birth of the society of slavery—is not utopian or contradictory to the laws of the universe and human nature but rather a

a few hours because the prisoner movement was ready to overturn the Prison Directorate. When rights expanded and the administration was allowed to treat them as privileges, the Prison Directorate penetrated the stronghold of the prisoner movement and drowned it in the minutiae of daily life. The situation interacted with the moral decline that afflicted the prisoners after the signing of the Oslo Accords, so self-concerns dominated and became the decisive, determining factor in the life of the prisoner movement. The prison administration could not have detained any prisoner for even one hour if faced with a disciplined, coherent, tightly organized force prepared to defend their collective dignity and honor—even if all privileges were confiscated. In that case, those privileges would become rights that could not be wrested away, diminished, or seized.

Lesson Two

Given the current openness of our political movement and our national cause to the free peoples of the world and to international platforms, we can mobilize a vast army of fighters to support our people's struggle on all fronts of engagement, particularly the prisoners' cause in its political, humanitarian, and moral dimensions. But the reality shows that our political organizations and institutions still operate as if they trade retail rather than wholesale, as in developed markets, and they have not invested these relationships to champion our people's causes. Indeed, the number participating in an external solidarity sit-in for the prisoners often exceeds by tens or even hundreds of times the size of any local sit-in organized by all our institutions.

Lesson Three

The topics and arenas of confrontation with the enemy (Jerusalem, settlements, prisoners, the wall, etc.) must be removed from the circle of political bickering and the pathologies of division management. The prisoners' cause in particular must be a focal point for unifying ranks, and every effort should be made outside the walls to reinforce internal unity

confiscated the cigarettes. He went to the opposing room of the political prisoners, furious, accusing its occupants of supplying the cigarettes. One of them replied: "What harm is there in that if it calms him down?" He didn't like the answer and threatened to issue an infraction against that prisoner. They replied that when they want to do a humane act that should have been done, they don't ask and they don't care about his rules and procedures; nonetheless they did everything possible to transfer the accused prisoners who had acted humanely and helped a prisoner in need, regardless of his identity, religion, or nationality.

These incidents are also symptomatic: the policy of isolation aims to break an individual's social ties and drown the prisoner in the minutiae of daily life to distract him from larger issues. But however keen the prisoners are to rise above these petty details, the rigidity of the instructions and the guards' stupidity impose them on us. The goal of solitary confinement policy is daily — if not hourly — exhaustion of the isolated prisoner: to keep him in a constant state of anxiety, to affect him psychologically and nervously, to weaken him in a bid to destroy him completely.

VII: Lessons Drawn from the Solitary Confinement Experience

Lesson One

It is necessary to restore respect for the cohesion of the prisoner movement, its combative role, and the firmness of its organizations. There were years when the prisoner movement had fewer rights and gains, but it was more powerful, proud, and vigorous. In that reality the prison administration did not dare to keep any prisoner in isolation for more than

historical possibility gradually transforming into a realistic one. The martyrdom of Che Guevara in Bolivia or Rachel Corrie in Gaza heralds beyond doubt that the fabric of international solidarity and joint struggle pursues the invasion of transcontinental monopolies and the carriers of war and destruction.

Today, these revolutionary waves clash and become more united and steadfast to achieve the inevitability of the victory of the will of oppressed peoples and classes and the substance of their humanitarian goals. This has become a reality that cannot be concealed, just as decades ago the cries of Irish prisoners moved the human conscience in every corner of the universe, resonating with the echoes of Turkish prisoners' hunger strikes and merging with the cries of Guantanamo prisoners. Prisoners now have a distinctive voice in the era of uprising peoples, a voice that can be heard anywhere in the world—perhaps even across cosmic space. The ringing of their chains grows and widens its waves, moving with it all forms of hatred, racism, and discrimination to isolate them outside our world, so that the oppressed may enjoy freedom.

VI: Miscellaneous from the Life of Solitary Confinement

An Unwanted Summer...

On March 21, 2011, while my cellmate was traveling to attend court, in the afternoon hours I heard a guard in the cellblock corridor telling me that a snake had entered the cell. Because I was engrossed in reading and didn't see it, I tried to search for it but could not find it. I requested the administration to come to the cell and take me out of the room. Indeed, a large force arrived and took me out to the adjacent section. After more

than two hours, the duty officer came and informed me that they had conducted a thorough search throughout the cell but found no snake, which meant it had managed to escape. I returned to the room, doubtful of his statement, searched briefly around the room, and found it on the top bunk, coiled around a food container. It was a venomous and dangerous type, with a small head connected to a long, thin, and thickened midsection neck.

I summoned the officer again and asked him to open the door and see the snake that the administration claimed had left. I was taken out of the room, and a team entered, caught it alive, and put it in a jar. After they left, one of the colleagues pointed out that more than twenty policemen had entered the room, including the security officer and others, and was surprised that such a large number failed to see it. When I asked some of the police for an explanation, they said the snake fell from the roof opening, and the police chased it in the corridor; it tried to enter several rooms but failed, then found a gap under my door and entered. This part of the story seems logical.

However, for more than twenty policemen and officers to enter a small room searching for a snake—not a fly—and not find it, this matter is open to multiple interpretations. To avoid getting obsessed and serving their goals, I submitted a written report along with a sworn statement to lawyer Anan Odeh from the Al-Dameer Foundation and asked him to keep it until there is a need to use it and to avoid raising the issue in the press.

Rigid Instructions + Guard Stupidity = No Rights

The instructions stipulated in the Prison Directorate's regulations for dealing with solitary confinement prisoners are rigid and binding on every officer and guard. When the instructions contradict logic, the guard must adhere strictly to the text of the instructions. Previously, in the Raymond isolation section, we had to fight for our right to receive copies of the Al-Quds newspaper brought by the Red Cross to all prison sections. When one of the guards began distributing the newspapers, two copies per cell, upon reaching our room we asked if he would pass the remaining copies to us after inspection in the rooms. He replied that this was prohibited

As usual, the prisoners' demands were met with a strange twist of creativity. When distributing the requested quantity, the prisoners were surprised to find that each loaf was cut into two parts. At first, the prisoners thought it was accidental, but when it happened again the next day, they asked the section director for an explanation. She replied it was for security reasons—something forbidden could be smuggled inside the loaf.

As the saying goes, once you know the reason, the surprise fades. Anyone who has lived in Zionist prisons knows for sure that anything entering prisoners in general, and political prisoners in particular, undergoes an extraordinary inspection. Everything passes through an electronic X-ray device, including the bread. This device displays the entire contents of closed bags on a TV screen, not just the bread. Here, hatred is mixed with stupidity, and the result is making the prisoner's life miserable for the simplest reasons.

A Bite from a Mule

In the Ohalikdar isolation section there is a guard who acts as the section manager — outwardly pleasant but pitch-black and deeply hateful inside. He insists on making life miserable for the prisoners even if it forces him to invent petty behaviors; he escorts inmates to the yard and insists on watching them closely even though it's already covered by precise cameras, inventing any pretext to justify this ludicrous surveillance.

There happened to be an elderly Jewish criminal prisoner in that section who suffered psychological disturbances and was almost constantly out of cigarettes. So he repeatedly begged for them whenever he went out to the yard opposite his cell window. The political prisoners offered this officer their readiness to help that prisoner and provide him with enough cigarettes, but he refused stubbornly and sadistically. So the prisoners decided to help him even if it cost burning down the whole section. The prisoner was entitled to receive cigarettes from the administration at a rate of four cigarettes a day, and indeed he was supplied after he rolled up a newspaper into a cylinder and passed it through the window grill so it reached the yard's grille. That same day the officer smelled smoke coming from the prisoner's cell, searched it, and

confinement to go out to the yard. The prisoners asked him to provide a general schedule for the cells so each prisoner would know his designated time and prepare in advance. The yard has no bathrooms, so preparation is essential. However, "Mazouz" was not interested in making it easy for the political prisoners to go out; to save effort and time and to satisfy his foolish hatred reflecting deficiencies in his character, he refused the prisoners' request. According to security rules, the prison's regulations must be strictly enforced, so less than half of the fourteen cells get yard time because many prisoners fail to prepare themselves properly.

After waves of protests, the administration was forced to distribute the schedule. Then "Mazouz" adopted another method: he goes to the cell whose turn it is, and if the prisoner refuses to come out for any reason, he moves on to the next scheduled cell regardless of the fixed timing in the program. Usually, the next cell's prisoner is unprepared to go out. Adding his racist, hate-filled behavior to the equation, his conduct reaches a new low in moral degradation. He does not apply the same rules to Jewish criminal prisoners—in fact, he chooses times that suit them, exploiting the confusion his behavior causes.

In summer, the yard is unsuitable for outings because after 10 AM the sun covers most of it, leaving less than one-tenth of the yard shaded.

"Mazouz," a stupid man saturated with racism and blind hatred, has his own theories and understanding of arithmetic. He does not rely on any decimal or binary system or anything similar. He follows the racist arithmetic of scientific racism. According to him: Palestinian + Palestinian = terrorism, not two. There is one "race" that fits the rules of arithmetic and addition and subtraction, and another that cannot be comprehended by sound mathematical rules.

The Whole Loaf is a Security Suspect

Prisoners in the Nafha isolation section requested to replace the bread they were given with "kamaj" bread baked in the prison oven, like the other prisoners in regular sections. The administration refused this under the pretext that the isolation section mixes political and criminal prisoners, some of whom do not like that type of bread. After insistence and pressure from the prisoners, the administration agreed.

and our right was limited to two copies only.

We explained to him that there is a difference between distributing vegetables and distributing newspapers, books, and magazines, but he remained firm because the instructions prevented him from transferring anything from one room to another. We then asked him to bring the section officer and question him. The guard returned and informed us that it was prohibited. We told him to go and bring all the copies brought by the Red Cross for our room and every other room. The guard returned and, on behalf of the section manager, told us that this was the quota of newspapers allowed for us.

Here, the mood of the section manager complicated the matter further. Of course, the guard's stupidity and the rigidity of the instructions deprived us of the right to access what was allowed, and we were denied the opportunity to read the newspaper because we rejected the matter outright instead of addressing the mistake through dialogue with a higher official.

A Higher Official but Even More Stupid
The Newspaper Is Banned for "Organization S"

After resolving the previous issue, about two months later a new problem arose: the newspaper was not being distributed to "Organization S." The guard who was distributing the papers stood in front of our room, checking the names of the detainees and the organizations they belonged to. After examining the list, he said the newspaper was banned for our room. We asked why and if we were being punished. He replied, "The newspaper is banned for Organization S." We told him that one of us belonged to Organization Ṣ (Ṣād), but he said, "I don't know because the newspaper is only allowed for Organization "(Ayn)." How can this equation be solved by such a stupid and narrow-minded guard?

We complained to the section manager, who said: "As long as the newspaper is banned for Organization S, it must be prevented from entering the room, even if it is allowed for Organization Ṣ." We said we had a solution. He asked, "What is it?" We answered that he should give the newspaper to the member of Organization Ṣ, and after receiving it,

the reader would sit facing the wall while the other would sit facing the opposite wall.

Reading the English Newspaper Is Prohibited

One of us obtained permission from the Ohalikdar prison administration to bring in the Haaretz newspaper in English and received its copies for about a week. Then the prisoner was transferred to Raymond prison. The law obliges the prison administration to notify the newspaper's office to redirect the copies to the new prison. When he requested this from the administration, he was refused. He told his lawyer, who handled the matter. The newspaper agreed to send a daily postal package in the prisoner's name.

The prisoner received only one copy, which arrived by chance. When he requested to receive it daily, the section manager told him that the newspaper was forbidden here and that this was the responsibility of the culture officer. Usually, the administration holds a weekly tour led by the prison director and accompanied by officials from all prisons. The culture officer was present and when confronted with the issue, she said it was not allowed because the subscription was made through the lawyer, not the prison administration.

They told her the newspaper was printed and distributed inside Israel and that Ohalikdar prison administration allowed subscriptions through a lawyer. She replied that this was forbidden and that one could only subscribe through the prison administration.

We requested to speak to the director or deputy director. The matter was referred to the deputy, who postponed the discussion until the next day. The next day, he came to the section, summoned the subscriber to the director's office, and brought a written order from the Prison Service Directorate banning the receipt of any newspaper unless it was in Hebrew. He was told this was against the law as stated in the instructions published by the Prison Directorate. He replied, "That's not my concern; it's a new order."

He returned to the subscription issue through the lawyer, and was told, "What fault does the prisoner have if in one prison he was allowed to subscribe this way and paid the subscription fee? Does that mean he must police flu so we don't see any of them."

One + One Does Not Equal Two

The prison officers in the solitary confinement section insist on strictly applying the regulations regarding the treatment of isolation prisoners with no exceptions. It is forbidden to take a prisoner out of his cell without handcuffs, and if the distance extends beyond the section, leg irons are added. Once, during a periodic inventory of the prisoner's clothes and belongings to ensure they match the permitted quantities and standards, a problem arose: the prisoner could not easily take his clothes and items out of the bag and put them back while handcuffed. So, one prisoner asked the officer to remove his handcuffs, but the officer refused. The prisoner then suggested putting the restraints on his legs instead of his hands so he could complete the tedious inventory quickly. The officer also refused.

Anything brought with the prisoner is subject to inspection before entering the cell. If clothes are brought via the Red Cross, the prisoner must return the old clothes to storage. When the prisoner presented his suggestion to the officer, the latter thought a moment and replied, "Forbidden, these are instructions."

Faced with such stupidity, the prisoner refused to participate in the inventory unless his restraints were removed. The police then carried out their duty harshly and crudely, fueled by hatred and the desire to punish him for his stubbornness. On such a day, the section resembles a bathhouse cut off from water: one prisoner talks to the officer, another quarrels with a different officer, and the inventory drags on for hours. The officer acts according to the rule "Take it slow with your own," and it is forbidden for one plus one to equal two.

Back to "Mazouz," Ashkelon, & the One + One Equation

The administration assigned officer Samer, nicknamed "Mazouz," at Ashkelon Prison to organize the schedule for the prisoners in solitary

"That's your problem; don't buy them." Because the prisoner refuses to give up, the relationship between him and the guard resembles that of "Tom and Jerry": sometimes the prisoner camouflages the wire and changes its angle, or throws it onto the upper grid covering the space between the windows and the wall. Each prison has its own geography that dictates how wires can be used, and this knowledge is passed down from one prisoner to the next.

Teasing the Birds is a Security Violation

The birds are sensitive creatures trying to show their sympathy with the prisoners of freedom as they sneak between the wires and crawl under the iron gates that separate the yard from the isolation rooms. This scene is unique to the isolation prisoners in Nafha Prison. As a gesture of gratitude and an attempt by the prisoner to reclaim his stolen humanity, the prisoners feed the birds by throwing pieces of bread and grains of rice near the cell door or in the corridor between opposite rooms. The birds gather to eat, run or jump from corner to corner, flutter, and sometimes even fight. This incidental relationship between the prisoner and the birds displeases the guard, who tries to chase the birds away and warns the prisoner about the danger of breaking rules and threatening security.

The guard, before starting his shift, closes his mind for fear of using it or allowing himself to think, because that might undermine the security theory he is constantly injected with. The guard's job, as he understands it, is to turn the prisoner into a rigid mechanical being devoid of life, or at best a biological being. If this tightly controlled system is broken, it might violate the order of the universe, harm theprison's security, public security, or even global security. When discussing this issue with some of them, they have no response except the words "Forbidden," "These are instructions," or the popular saying, "A goat, even if it flies" (meaning rules are strict regardless of circumstances).

And to avoid unfair criticism of the "prisoners' welfare institution," this matter is linked to the concept of preserving the environment and the health and safety of the prisoner, which they overly guard. How not? There is bird flu, right? So why not mosquito flu, bedbug flu, or cockroach flu... etc.? The prisoners' silent wish is: "Oh God, bless us with

lose the money just because Prison 'Ṣ' doesn't prefer it?"

The guard said the newspaper is brought by the Red Cross to the regular sections and is not banned. Then the officer objected that no one in the prison understands English. He was told to check the Hebrew version as they are the same or not to bring the supplement accompanying the Herald Tribune. He closed the discussion saying: "That's all I have. If you don't like it, go to court." Thus, the right was lost amid rigidity. The solitary confinement law is applied according to the common saying: "The one who is divided doesn't eat, and the divided one eats till full."

Another Discussion with a Stupid Guard

This event has nothing to do with thought or culture, but rather with vegetables. At Raymond Prison, solitary confinement prisoners have a right under which each prisoner receives a monthly bag of vegetables at the expense of prisoners in the regular sections. When the guard brought the vegetables and began distributing them, he gave the first room its share because its inmates were from Fatah, but refused to give the second room because they were from Hamas. When distribution reached our room, he said the vegetables were also forbidden for us because they were forbidden for Hamas. We told him that one of the inmates in our room belonged to the Popular Front (Jabhat al-Sha'abiyya). He said he would ask and left the distribution to inquire with the section manager. The manager replied that vegetables were also forbidden for the Popular Front.

The next day the section manager came and we asked him to explain the ban, especially after the Fatah rooms returned what vegetables they had received. He said the reason was that Hamas, the Popular Front, and Islamic Jihad prisoners had gone on a one-day strike and were therefore deprived of purchasing vegetables, which were at Fatah's expense. We told him the solitary confinement section hadn't gone on strike because they hadn't been informed. He replied, "That is true, but these vegetables are at Fatah's expense." We asked him how many shares Fatah had sent. He said for everyone. We asked why, if the shares were for everyone, they had not been distributed. He said he needed to ask Fatah prisoners in the regular sections. We said we were ready to answer for them and guarantee

no objection. He insisted on asking.

When he came the next day, the answer he received was, of course, positive, and he ordered the guard to distribute the vegetables. We requested that the bags be distributed to everyone in the section—security prisoners and criminal prisoners, Arabs and Jews—which was our usual practice. He refused and said he would ask about that. After asking, when he came on the third day to distribute the vegetables as we wished, many of the vegetables had spoiled.

A New Discussion with a Stupid Guard

The administration in Ashkelon Prison brought in a large watermelon, at the expense of prisoners in the regular sections. This large size exceeded what one person needed. The on-duty officer at that time was Russian, very strict and literal in enforcing the rules. We jokingly nicknamed him "Mazuz," after the Israeli Supreme Court judge Mazuz.

The discussion lasted long, and we, as politicians, decided not to eat the watermelon until the distribution of watermelon was approved for all cells in the section—both criminal and political prisoners. The watermelon was enough to distribute half a watermelon to each cell. We waited until "Mazuz's" shift ended, and a new officer of Ethiopian origin came on duty, who was less strict than his predecessor. He said he agreed and would ask the section officer. The latter agreed but only for one time.

Black Valentine's Day

On February 13, 2010, one day before Valentine's Day, the administration informed two prisoners to prepare themselves for transfer to "Eshl" Prison. In such cases, they had to prepare their belongings before 7 AM the next morning. In the evening, preparations began by gathering and packing their bags and cleaning the room to be ready to receive a new inmate.

The two prisoners finished their preparations at 1:30 AM. On the morning of Valentine's Day, at 7 AM, the section officer arrived to escort them to the inspection room, which took about an hour. Then, as per

Solitary Confinement Is Not a Social Punishment

Those who describe solitary confinement as a form of social punishment wrong. The Israeli Prison Service Directorate and strip this institution of some of the most important human values, which are essential to the democracy the state represents. The prisoner is not alone in his cell—not only because solitary confinement can be done in pairs, but more importantly because the cell's community is rich with diverse social components and an incredible number of cockroaches, reptiles, and rats that share the inmate's living space. Aren't cockroaches and other insects living creatures one can keep company with? So how can the isolated prisoner be considered oppressed under such delicate humane conditions?

The Radio Is Not for Use

A radio device is allowed to be purchased from the prison canteen, as are dry batteries and a charger. Prisoners in solitary confinement are also allowed to use it anytime they want. But this device is like "Abu Lamma'a's box" — a famous character from Egyptian radio comedy in the 1960s — where one of Abu Lamma'a's friends informs him that his box was stolen, to which he confidently replies, "I still have the key!" The radio needs a thin wire to be connected and this wire must be extended outside the window to be able to pick up Arabic radio stations, especially those concerned with the social network between prisoners and their families. The reason for this is the presence of many electronic devices in the prison, in addition to cell phone jamming devices installed by the administration to prevent prisoners from using such devices if available, and the limited space from which waves can be received.

However, the keen prison officer on duty, backed by administrative instructions, prioritizes the task of confiscating these wires during his rounds. Moreover, violations are recorded against cells that use these wires. Despite complaints and all forms of protest, prisoners only hear the word "forbidden" and "against the regulations" from prison officers.

When asked why radios are banned for prisoners, the response is,

found it!" The comrades initially woke up annoyed by the sudden noise, but when they understood, each stood by their window. Some managed to see the moon; others were disappointed despite waiting until morning.

This story reflects the extent of the injustice caused by the malicious propaganda about the Israeli Prison Service. This "respected institution" is very keen to prevent any infiltration of romanticism into the souls of the prisoners, so as not to restrain their will and firmness. The prisoner is not an ordinary person. In other words, it fears that the "Palestinian terrorist" might develop a split personality disorder, so it blocks all openings and cracks from which the "virus of romanticism" might seep in.

The Sewing Needle... A Tactical Missile

One isolated prisoner in Ramon Prison was allowed to bring in clothes through the Red Cross. As usual, the clothes were held for a few days for thorough inspection. When the section director handed the clothes over to the prisoner, some were torn during the inspection. The prisoner summoned the section director to first protest, and secondly, to bring sewing supplies to fix the damage. The officer replied that inspection was legal, and sewing needles were banned for security reasons. The prisoner asked him to send the needle to the prison's tailor, but the officer said there was no tailor in the prison.

The officer told him, "Deal with it yourself." But when he saw the anger in the prisoner's eyes and heard the threat of a hunger strike, he had to bring a needle and thread—but on the condition they be returned within less than an hour.

The next day, the deputy director came during his weekly round, surrounded by the full repression team, asking prisoners about their needs. The prisoner asked him why the needle and thread were banned. The deputy director replied, "That's the instruction. Needles are a security risk for prisoners." The prisoner asked why. The deputy director said it might be used to undo restraints. The prisoner laughed and asked, "And after undoing the restraints? Where will the prisoner go in a geographical space surrounded by fences and full of cameras, police dogs, officers, and high walls?" Indeed, as the saying goes, "The worst calamity is what makes you laugh."

procedure, they were moved to the waiting room, where their belongings were supposed to be loaded into the transfer vehicle ("bosta") to depart after 8 AM, or at worst by 8:30 AM. Both stayed in the waiting room for more than two hours until the transfer truck arrived, but they were not loaded onto it. When they asked the officer about the vehicle, he told them they would be transferred on the second truck expected at noon.

Meanwhile, a representative from the Red Cross arrived and insisted on meeting the prisoners. The administration allowed the visit. One prisoner was brought to an adjacent room, handcuffed, to meet the Red Cross delegates waiting there. He asked the responsible officer to remove his restraints, but the officer refused, citing the law. The Red Cross representative also protested. Then the prisoner refused the visit unless his restraints were removed, so he was returned to the waiting room. When the other prisoner learned what had happened, he too refused the Red Cross visit.

At 2:30 PM, the transfer truck arrived. After loading the belongings and settling in one of the transport cells, the truck moved—but in the opposite direction from the expected route. This meant it took the way toward Negev Prison, which more than doubled the expected travel time if they had headed straight to Eshl.

The two prisoners remained handcuffed, hands and feet, for over two hours waiting for the vehicle to fill its load from Negev Prison. This load was of prisoners on their way to freedom, which meant the vehicle would head to the Tarkumiya or Az-Zahiriya checkpoints near Hebron, requiring an additional hour to an hour and a half to reach. The vehicle reached one of the checkpoints, where the freed prisoners were released. The truck then returned, heading toward Eshl Prison, arriving at exactly 7 PM. The two prisoners unloaded their belongings in the inspection room, waiting for the on-duty officer, who arrived about half an hour later.

The inspection and the ensuing debate over what was allowed or forbidden to be brought into the cell took about an hour. Afterward, the prisoners moved to their assigned cell. Naturally, cleaning and arranging their belongings took at least an hour and a half, especially since the cell lacked shelves to organize clothes and other items.

They requested dinner but were surprised to find that dinner and breakfast were both distributed together at 4 PM, leaving them little to

satisfy their hunger, fitting the saying, "The evening guest finds no dinner." Despite their exhaustion, the two took time to comment on the journey. One of them suggested that, contrary to the unjust rumors tarnishing its image, the Prison Service Directorate wanted to show solidarity with them on this day, which held human meaning, and insisted on taking the long route to allow them a chance to enjoy the scenery through the dark tinted window glass. However, the truth was that this detour was a punishment for their refusal to meet the Red Cross delegate while restrained. The Red Cross delegate's refusal to conduct the visit under these conditions gave additional motive to the administration to mistreat the prisoners. In this case, the saying fits well: "From love, there is what kills."

One of the prisoners went to what is called the "Zionist Supreme Court of Justice" in Jerusalem to appeal, through his lawyer, against his isolation order. Usually, reporters from some Israeli media networks and stations attend the courtroom.

Upon entering the courtroom, the journalists began asking him questions. Since he supports a boycott of the Israeli media, he refused to answer their questions.

When his family arrived at the courtroom, he greeted them warmly, especially since he hadn't seen their faces for over a year and a half due to being denied family visits. The media picked up this brief exchange and published it.

The next day, when he returned to prison, the administration summoned him to find the section director waiting for him. By chance, or fate, it was International Women's Day—March 8.

The section director began by explaining the situation, saying that the prisoner escort police had filed a report accusing him of violating general orders by speaking to the press, which is against the law. The prisoner smiled and started his response by congratulating her on Women's Day as a moral and value-based solidarity stance with women in general. The director was taken aback but continued the session by asking if it was true that he had spoken to the media. The prisoner repeated his congratulations and added that he had not done so—not because he respects orders and instructions, but because he does not engage with the Zionist media.

The section director called the unit officer who escorts prisoners—the "Nagshon Unit"—and asked for clarification. The officer stated that the prisoner did not respect the orders and instructions prohibiting speaking to the press, but he did not understand what the prisoner said due to his Arabic accent.

The session was adjourned, and the prisoner was returned to his cell. Less than half an hour later, he was summoned to resume the session. Facing the "stone-faced" woman who began by claiming she had reviewed the website of Israel's Channel 2 and saw him talking and waving his hand, the prisoner smiled and replied that what she said was true; however, when he waved his hand, he was greeting his wife on Women's Day and not speaking to the press.

Nevertheless, she issued her ruling: he would be punished with one month of solitary confinement with a suspended sentence if the violation recurred.

The prisoner laughed and said to her: "March 8 is supposed to be a day to honor women, not to take revenge on men—even if they are Palestinians."

The Sun "Sure," but the Moon Maybe

The places of isolation vary in terms of their inmates' access to natural phenomena. Some deny you sunlight inside the cell and outside it, while others allow partial views, depending on the timing of yard access. The moon, however, is a very rare sight and an emotional one at that. Many isolated prisoners used to stay up nights to see the full moon, a crescent, or even a sliver of it, depending on the angle of view allowed.

One night in June, a prisoner saw the moon from his cell in the isolation section of Ramon Prison and excitedly shared the news with his comrades. They all rushed to their cell windows, but the walls were too high, blocking the view for most.

A day or two after this moon sighting, another prisoner inside his cell shouted happily at around 2:30 a.m. to wake his comrade to see the moon he had been waiting for days, perhaps years. His excitement echoed Archimedes' famous phrase upon discovering the relationship between a body's volume and the volume of displaced liquid: "Eureka! I found it, I